

Kanady, Stephanie

From: Mark Siegel <info@thesoftedge.com>
Sent: Monday, October 03, 2011 10:07 AM
To: Kanady, Stephanie
Subject: Washington Post Op-Ed by President Asif Ali Zardari of Pakistan, published on 10/1/2011

Click To View Documents: [Talk To, Not At Pakistan by President Zardari 10.1.2011.docx \(49KB\)](#);

Adam,

I thought you would be interested in this op-ed published in yesterday's Washington Post. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

All the best,
Mark

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The Washington Post

Talk to, not at, Pakistan

By Asif Ali Zardari, Published: September 30

Democracy always favors dialogue over confrontation. So, too, in Pakistan, where the terrorists who threaten both our country and the United States have gained the most from the recent verbal assaults some in America have made against Pakistan. This strategy is damaging the relationship between Pakistan and the United States and compromising common goals in defeating terrorism, extremism and fanaticism.

It is time for the rhetoric to cool and for serious dialogue between allies to resume.

Pakistan sits on many critical fault lines. Terrorism is not a statistic for us. Our geopolitical location forces us to look to a future where the great global wars will be fought on the battleground of ideas. From the Middle East to South Asia, a hurricane of change is transforming closed societies into marketplaces of competing narratives. The contest between the incendiary politics of extremism and the slow burn of modern democracy is already being fought in every village filled with cellphones, in every schoolroom, on every television talk show. It is a battle that moderation must win.

Our motives are simple. We have a huge population of young people who have few choices in life. Our task is to turn this demographic challenge into a dividend for democracy and pluralism, where the embrace of tolerance elbows out the lure of extremism, where jobs turn desolation into opportunity and empowerment, where plowshares take the place of guns, where women and minorities have a meaningful place in society.

None of this vision for a new Pakistan is premised on the politics of victimhood. It pivots on a worldview where we fight the war against extremism and terrorism as our battle, at every precinct and until the last person, even though we lack the resources to match our commitment. When Pakistan seeks support, we look for trade that will make us sustainable, not aid that will bind us in transactional ties. When we commit to a partnership against terrorism, we do it in the hope that our joint goals will be addressed. When we add our shoulder to the battle, we look for outcomes that leave us stronger.

Yet as Pakistan is pounded by the ravages of globally driven climate change, with floods once again making millions of our citizens homeless, we find that, instead of a dialogue with our closest strategic ally, we are spoken to instead of being heard. We are being battered by nature and by our friends. This has shocked a nation that is bearing the brunt of the terrorist whirlwind in the region. And why?

After the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, the world's most powerful democracy compromised its fundamental values to accommodate a dictator in Pakistan. Since then we have lost 30,000 innocent civilians and 5,000 military and police officers to the militant mind-set that the U.S. government is now charging that we support. We have suffered more than 300 suicide bomb attacks by the forces that allegedly find sanctuary within our borders. We have hemorrhaged approximately \$100 billion directly in the war effort and tens of billions more in lost foreign

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investment. The war is being fought in Afghanistan and in Pakistan, yet Washington has invested almost nothing on our side of the border and hundreds of billions of dollars on the other side.

We fight an ideology that feeds on brutality and coercion that has taken the lives of our minister for minorities, Shahbaz Bhatti, and Gov. Salman Taseer, among thousands of others. And we have seen our greatest leader, the mother of my children, assassinated by a conspiracy that was powered by the same mind-set we are now accused of tolerating.

Both our nations need to learn from history. South and Central Asia is a region of complexity and nuance where mistakes repeat dangerously and where many empires have floundered. In the 10 years that NATO has been in the neighborhood, it has not even attempted to choke the world's largest production of narcotic contraband that funds terrorist activity. Yet we struggle to hold the line against the tidal wave of extremism that surges into Pakistan each day from internationally controlled areas of Afghanistan. While we are accused of harboring extremism, the United States is engaged in outreach and negotiations with the very same groups.

The Pakistani street is thick with questions. My people ask, Is our blood so cheap? Are the lives of our children worthless? Must we fight alone in our region all those that others now seek to embrace? And how long can we degrade our capacity by fighting an enemy that the might of the NATO global coalition has failed to eliminate?

As the United States plans to remove its ground forces from Afghanistan and once again leave our region, we are attempting to prepare for post-withdrawal realities. The international community abandoned Central and South Asia a generation ago, triggering the catastrophe that we now find ourselves in. Whoever comes or goes, it is our coming generation that will face the firestorm. We have to live in the neighborhood. So why is it unreasonable for us to be concerned about the immediate and long-term situation of our Western border? History will not forgive us if we don't take responsibility.

Where do the United States and Pakistan go from here? We are partners in a world where broadcasts and bombs know no borders. We fight a common menace. We share the same democratic values and dreams for a moderate, modern, pluralistic, democratic South and Central Asia. We jointly appreciate that trade, job creation and manufacturing will dry up conscripts for the extremist banner, yet we never saw Congress approve the Reconstruction Opportunity Zones that were meant to secure vulnerable livelihoods. We are on convergent policy tracks, but our rhetoric has split us onto divergent roads.

The recent accusations against us have been a serious setback to the war effort and our joint strategic interests. It is not as if Pakistanis will stop reclaiming our terrain, inch by inch, from the extremists, even without the United States. We are a tenacious people. We will not allow religion to become the trigger for terrorism or persecution.

But when we don't strategize together, and when an ally is informed instead of consulted, we both suffer. The sooner we stop shooting verbal arrows at each other and coordinate our resources against the advancing flag of fanaticism, the sooner we can restore stability to the land for which so much of humanity continues to sacrifice.

The writer is president of Pakistan.

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